

APPROVED CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

January 18, 2021

ZOOM MEETING, 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Steve Moffatt, Chair; Diane Morgan, Treasurer; June Cook, Secretary; Susie Houston, Select Board Liaison; John Brodhead, Farley Brown, Carol Maroni, Ashley Nunery, Elinor Osborn, Heidi Rich

MINUTES: Minutes of December 21, 2020 were approved.

Susie explained that transferring of assets from the school district to the Craftsbury Academy Trustees was on the warning. The transfer would include the CA woodlot on Wylie Hill. She said the commission should reach out to the trustees to begin a discussion about a conservation easement. The town needs to be savvy about the article and understand why it was on the warning. Steve is on the CA Trustees and will follow through on the conversation about the woodlot. Most people will be blindsided by the article if information is not brought out to the community on why the transfer of assets is being considered.

TOWN MEETING: Steve explained that he had e-mailed Michelle Warren about placing the commission's request for a \$7,000 appropriation from the Good Neighbor Fund onto the warning. Susie will follow up on the wording and its being the same as last year's.

Steve will post information on Front Porch Forum to seek support for the commission's appropriation request. Carol suggested each commission member try to contact 10 people to apprise them of the article and seek support. Other communities seek funding through town taxes whereas the commission's appropriation comes from the Good Neighbor Fund. Diane will create a poster to place at stores, library, post office, and town hall to reach a segment of townspeople who are not on ZOOM or electronically connected.

Susie reported a last-minute request for GNF funds had been received. It isn't certain there would be enough GNF this year to cover the requests from various entities.

ACT 171: Farley explained the role the Conservation Commission could play in helping the Planning Commission with ACT 171. The commission's role would be communicating with the greater population about protecting the environment and natural heritage of the community. Bringing in someone from Fish & Wildlife was suggested. Other avenues: having a public event to help educate people about ACT 171, helping in outreach and planning for a broader conversation on the legislation and planning within communities.

ACT 171 encourages and allows towns to address protecting forest blocks and habitat connectors. Municipalities are encouraged to identify regional and local

significant forest blocks and habitat connectors while supporting local forest products industry.

She displayed an Agency of Natural Resource Biofinder map which classified areas in town and how they relate to the intent of ACT 171. Craftsbury's total acreage is 25,408, of which 69 percent is forest and water. Craftsbury has 60 percent of land in Current Use program.

Connectivity Blocks: areas critical for habitat connectivity; areas connecting core habitat and allowing genetic exchange – 1,044 acres (4% of town land base)

Priority Blocks: Areas of importance in wildlife habitat – 2,683 (10% of town land base)

Highest Priority Interior Forests: Areas especially important for the interior forest function that the area provides – 10,748 (42%)

The terrestrial "backbone" of forest blocks is a subset of all Connectivity Blocks that provides connectivity to all biophysical regions. The "backbone" incorporates the spines of the major mountain ranges, connections outside Vermont to unfragmented habitat, and anchor blocks in fragmented biophysical regions with abundant occurrences of rare species, significant natural communities, wildlife habitats, corridors, and genetic dispersal. Small forest blocks are included at pinch-points in the connectivity network as they are critical stepping stones.

Priority Interior Forests: 3,104 acres (12%) These are the forest blocks that provide a major supporting connectivity function for the "backbone" of highest priority Connectivity Blocks. They also provide alternative pathways for connectivity, as redundancy is a critical safeguard in ensuring the long term effectiveness of the connectivity network.

OTHER BUSINESS: June reported the Greensboro Town Website has a document, separate from the warning and Australian ballot, that explains each article on the warning. She suggested it would be helpful to have a similar document on the town's website and in print form for those not on Zoom or comfortable with computers.

Carol identified growing the Conservation fund, particularly to access matching funds and grants, as one main action we can take as a commission to prepare to protect specific parcels which define the town and are important in different ways. The Craftsbury Conservation Fund needs to be built up to be in a position to secure matching funds in protecting such areas. Partnering with landowners and other groups are different avenues to pursue; each situation would be different.

Elinor said Pete Emerson of Fish & Wildlife had grant money to help communities get rid of knotweed in community gardens and the commission might look at these grants.

Commission members were urged to be on the list serv of the Association of State Conservation Commissions.

The next meeting of the commission will be Monday, February 15, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM.